

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on Thursday 17 June 2021 at 1.30 pm

Present:

P Welch (Chair) In the Chair

Church of England

Canon L Burton and H Tait

Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

S Baker - Roman Catholic
W Gray - Buddhism
M Turner - Islam

Teachers Associations

B Dunn - RE Curriculum Group

County Council Representatives

Councillors D Haney and M Walton

Co-opted Member:

S Walker - Humanist

Education Durham Support and Provision Lead

J Rimmer

1 Introductions, Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Members to introduce themselves.

Apologies for absence were received from V Bain, J Bainbridge, M Dixon, N Dodd, A Hartley, FA Johnson, M Lowden, S Lupton, J Nicholls, J Pallister, C Spencer, D Van der Velde, C Weir and Councillors S Townsend and C Varty.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020 and read out the following statement:

“Following the discussion at the meeting held on 4 March 2021, I have sought advice from the Head of Legal Services about the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020. I have been advised that in accordance with SACRE’s Constitution, we should not have been asked to endorse the Humanist Guidance as this is not SACREs role under the Constitution, we should have been asked to “note” the report.

In view of that clarification, members were asked to now confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020 are approved as a correct record and the minutes of the meeting today would note this point of clarification.

He had extended an invitation to the representative of legal services to attend the November meeting, to remind Members of our responsibilities set out in the Education Act 1996 and confirmed in SACRE’s Constitution.”

Members referred to page 3 of the minutes and asked that C Spencer be included as part of the SACRE planning team.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of C Spencer as a member of the SACRE planning team and were signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to the items of business on the agenda.

4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5 Chairs Comments

The Chair advised Members that he had received correspondence from a Member of SACRE in relation to how the Durham Agreed Syllabus had been received.

Concerns had been received from one primary school who had indicated that they were having some difficulties designing a curriculum from the Local Agreed Syllabus and they had found the previous version more useful.

The Chair indicated that nothing had changed substantially from the previous version of the agreed syllabus, and that they had only strengthened and added to the 2020 Local Agreed Syllabus.

He had consulted with Education Durham on the matter and provided a response to the Member that they believed that the Durham Agreed Syllabus was a rigorous document to promote age-appropriate Religious Education. They recognised that some colleagues may need support with the Durham Agreed Syllabus and had made that offer available through Education Durham, for any schools who required support.

The Chair then paid tribute to teachers and support staff in schools in particularly secondary schools for the work they had carried out for GCSE and A Level teacher assessment grades. He also paid tribute to students for all their hard work during the difficult period in education caused by the global pandemic.

He also advised Members that a planning meeting had been held prior to the SACRE meeting that had been helpful and would be the driving force behind SACRE, in terms of setting the agenda for meetings and focusing the work of SACRE. The Chair would like to continue with these meetings.

6 SACRE Membership

Members were advised that the membership of Durham SACRE was for a four-year period that would expire on 31 August 2021. The Clerk would be writing to faith groups for their nominations.

The Chair asked that the order of the agenda be amended so that the next item to be considered was the Education Durham Report to SACRE

7 Education Durham Report to SACRE

Members considered the Education Durham Report to SACRE that provided details of the Education Durham Support to Schools in 2020-2021 to date. The report also advised Members that Darlington Borough Council had approached the Council in relation to adopting the Durham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Education Durham Support and Provisional Lead Officer presented the report.

Canon L Burton asked if Members of SACRE could also be kept up to date regarding regional and national updates. The Education Durham Support and Provisional Lead Officer responded that she would be happy to share this information and would have a conversation with the Chair outside the meeting on a suitable way to share this information with SACRE Members.

In response to a question about support for RE teachers in Durham LA, H Tait advised Members that she would be attending the RE network meetings and could present her notes to SACRE.

W Gray referred to the e-book Resource pack that supported the Durham Agreed Syllabus and as discussed at the last meeting, asked if SACRE Members could also have access to this resource.

The Education Durham Support and Provisional Lead Officer responded that at the last SACRE meeting it was agreed that she would share selective information and she would make sure that this was carried out.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

8 Additional Guidance for Humanism

The Chair gave a brief explanation around the additional guidance for Humanism and that SACRE were not able to endorse the guidance and should have only noted the report at the meeting held in March 2020.

S Walker indicated that at the March 2020 SACRE meeting a couple of amendments were suggested for the document and the correct version of the document was contained on the North East Humanist website.

She then advised Members that it was herself who brought the document to Durham SACRE and advised that other authorities had endorsed the document. She was happy to withdraw the request to endorse the document given that SACRE can't endorse documents. The document had been used and they had received a lot of positive feedback from secondary and primary teachers and Humanists had been using the resources themselves when they went into schools.

In response to a statement from S Walker regarding comments against Humanists, the Chair indicated that SACRE was an inclusive and diverse space with people from all religions and non-religious world views. Members were reminded that they needed to give thought and consideration to words very carefully and he was committed to this as Chair of SACRE.

W Gray indicated that she was pleased that the position on the endorsement of the Humanist guidance document had been clarified. She suggested that they formally thank the North East Humanist society for proposing the document. She also suggested that SACRE investigate the possibility of the Durham SACRE Agreed Syllabus 2020 being revised early to incorporate a specific section on non-religious world views, that currently was not contained within the agreed syllabus.

The Chair referred to the early revision of the Durham Agreed Syllabus and indicated that he would take legal advice on this to ascertain if legislation would allow this.

The Chair then formally thanked the North East Humanist Society for the guidance document on behalf of Durham SACRE.

In response to a question as to why SACRE could not endorse the document the Chair advised Members that a legal colleague would attend the November meeting, and this could be discussed at that meeting, but the advice he was given was that the document could be noted but not endorsed.

Members briefly discussed additional support materials for teachers on non-religious world views. The Chair indicated that this was to be considered under Agenda Item No.10.

The Chair advised Members that the meeting was no longer quorate, and the meeting would be adjourned. The remaining business would be considered at the next SACRE meeting

9 Report from NASACRE AGM

Consideration of this item would be considered at the next SACE meeting.

10 Additional Support Materials for Teachers

Consideration of this item would be considered at the next SACE meeting.

11 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next SACRE meeting was to be determined.